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STATEMENT OF JOHN J. SLOAN
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DEFENSE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON ASIAN AND PACIFIC AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
CONCERNING
THE SITUATION IN CAMBODIA
11 March 1985

Classified by Multiple Sources
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Mr. Chairman,

(C) My name is John J. Sloan. I am the Defense Intelligence Officer for East Asia and Pacific. I appreciate this opportunity to discuss with you DIA's understanding of the recent tragic events in Kampuchea, the status of and prospects for the resistance, and other related issues. Through prior arrangements with your staff and my colleagues, my statement will focus on the military aspects of the subject.

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Should you desire information beyond what we are able to provide today, we will do our best to satisfy your requirements.

(C) By way of introduction, I would note that the Vietnamese military achievements which we have recently witnessed would have been no surprise if they had occurred one year earlier. Last year it was our view that Vietnam possessed the military capability and intent to destroy the border resistance camps, with first priority on elimination of the KPNLF non-Communist camps, in a fashion similar to that executed this year. We believe several factors, including an unusually long wet season, surprisingly effective resistance military activity, and a lengthy Vietnamese diplomatic offensive were responsible for the military restraint which, in the event, Hanoi exercised. It is likely that Vietnamese political and military leaders were frustrated and angered when resistance leaders claimed success having defended themselves against very modest attacks. We saw signs throughout the past wet season that Vietnam intended to reverse the growing strength, both factually and perceptually based, which the resistance had achieved. Due to the unwillingness or inability of the non-Communist resistance to organize and operate in accordance with classic guerrilla principles, their enclaves have long remained

sitting targets vulnerable to eventual overrun.

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THE MILITARY SITUATION

(S) This year's dry season offensive in Cambodia by Vietnamese and People's Republic of Kampuchea (PRK) forces was the most ambitious and effective since the 1978 Vietnamese invasion. Every major Khmer People's National Liberation Front (KPNLF) camp was overrun, Democratic Kampuchea (DK) troops were forced out of some of their most important enclaves, and the only large Armée Nationale Sihanoukiste (ANS) base is currently under attack. The fall of so many base camps in little over three months obviously has dealt a serious blow to the image and at least the short term capability of the resistance, but it has not detracted from the willingness of the resistance's supporters to continue supplying aid. The most important impact of the Vietnamese campaign has been the disruption of resistance forces, damage to their logistics operations, and serious detraction from their ability to mount operations in the interior. This year's fighting has had little effect on the order of battle of any of the resistance groups. - Their casualties are not very heavy, they have successfully evacuated and reconstituted their troops, and they have maintained their unit integrity. The People's Republic of Kampuchea Armed Force (PRKAF) continues its modest growth, and the People's Army of Vietnam (PAVN) augmented its forces, at least temporarily, by two divisions from southern Vietnam.

(S) The total of forces for the KPNLF and ANS is determined in large measure by the amount of arms available. Recent deliveries have brought the totals to about 15,000 for the KPNLF and about 7,000 for the ANS. The KPNLF has regrouped, and its units are intact. Chief of Staff Sak Sutsakan has

ambitious plans for converting the KPMLF into a true guerrilla force, but the KPMLF is not engaged in significant military operations at this time. Its interior operations have been severely curtailed. The ANS will abandon Ta Tum in the face of a determined PAVN/PRK attack and regroup its forces later. While the attacks did not destroy the non-Communist forces, they have nearly terminated their operations for the time being.

(S) DK forces number about 35,000-40,000 and can probably not expand much beyond this. While several of their base camps have been overrun, most significantly the large enclave at Phnom Melai, their withdrawals generally were orderly; weapons and supplies were evacuated. Moreover, many DK troops dispersed back into the Cambodian interior, where we believe they have extensive supply caches.

(S) The PAVN has at least 150,000 troops in 12 Infantry Divisions, 2 Engineer Divisions, 1 Armored Brigade, and 2 Artillery Regiments. This force includes two additional divisions, the 2d and 7th, which were sent back into Cambodia from southern Vietnam early this year. The 7th reinforced the PAVN troops attacking Phnom Melai, and the 2d was sent to another area of DK activity near the Thai-Cambodian-Lao tri-border area. These forces obviously have been adequate to achieve Vietnam's immediate goals.

(S) The PRKAF has about 35,000 troops, over 20,000 of which are in provincial units whose primary function is the maintenance of internal security. The four small PRK divisions, each about the size of a regiment, with about 3,000 troops each, have been assuming a larger role in combat. Since the later stages of the 1983-84 dry season, there has been a substantial PRKAF element in the forces attacking the resistance bases. This year, the PRKAF was used exclusively in an attack on the KPMLF's O Bok base, and contributed forces to most of the other attacks. The Vietnamese are developing

the PRK divisions into forces which can now provide a useful augmentation to the PAVN, although their ability to operate on their own is still limited.

(S) As a result of the offensive, Vietnamese forces are deployed in greater strength along the Thai border than ever before, and we have firm indications that many of them plan to remain there, even in the former DK base area at Phnom Melai. During the 1984 wet season, the Vietnamese remained closer to the border than ever before and left heavy artillery, such as 130-mm guns, in forward positions with impunity. Their logistics system has been markedly improved, and they have been upgrading the road network in western Cambodia, often using thousands of Cambodians drafted for labor services. Only highly effective military action could force Vietnamese unity to withdraw during the wet season. During the remainder of the dry season, the Vietnamese likely will concentrate on heavy logistics resupply to forward positions in preparation for the wet season. They also will seek to limit as much as possible resistance infiltration back into the interior.

(S) The overrunning of the base camps has seriously detracted from the ability of the non-Communist factions to mount operations in the interior. Lacking extensive caches similar to those the DK probably have established inside the country, the non-Communists have relied on their base camps for support, sending small teams of commando-type forces into the interior for limited periods. The non-Communists have ambitious plans to resume interior operations from new mobile support bases, but these will not be put into effect at least until the onset of the wet season in April or May, and it remains to be seen whether this will happen at all.

PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT

(S) The Vietnamese were able to accomplish as much as they did this year because of a much more effective tactical implementation of their already

existing strategy. Their logistics system has greatly improved, and extensive preparations for this year's dry season began earlier than usual. We are aware of no major shortages of supplies, ammunition, or petroleum products near the border, in spite of very heavy expenditure of artillery and other ammunition. The forces deployed against the camps were much greater in number than last year, and there was a heavier use of armor. Elements of four divisions were used in the Phnom Melai attack. Two more Vietnamese divisions were brought back into Cambodia, at least temporarily. An-26/CURL pallet bombing and Mi-24/HIND helicopter gunship attacks were used in the interior, apparently to disrupt DK troop concentrations, command facilities, and logistics depots. Finally, the PRKAF has developed into a force which can at times significantly augment the Vietnamese.

(S) In the face of the Vietnamese/PRK force which was deployed against them this year, the resistance had no choice but to withdraw from the border camps. Their defeat in fixed positions in most cases was inevitable, and prolonged resistance would only have resulted in major losses of personnel and equipment. The base camps could not be defended against any more than the sort of modest force which attacked Ban Sa Ngae last spring. The resistance had for the most part, an adequate supply of weapons and ammunition, and in many cases received emergency resupplies There were, however, eventual shortages of some weapons, such as anti-tank rockets, which were often expended recklessly, without discipline. Defensive preparations in the larger camps such as Ban Sa Ngae were as good as could be expected for a force the size of the KPNLF garrison there; it might have held against a smaller Vietnamese force. But the disparity between the attacking and defending forces made defeat nearly inevitable.

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(S/NOFORN/NNINTEL/NOCONTRACT) We judge the resistance performance as suffering more from an inappropriate strategy and other weaknesses internal to the resistance movement than from the level of supplies provided. KPNLF and ANS leaders were tied too much to a siege mentality in which the major effort was directed toward defense of showcase bases.

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The Vietnamese at this point undoubtedly would prefer to continue attacking and overrunning border camps were they reestablished, thus tying up most of the resistance in defense of enclaves at the expense of far more worrisome interior operations.

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The DK, of course, are exclusively and amply supplied by the PRC. They have received some heavier weapons, such as 85-mm guns, which are not available to the non-Communists. Their troops are well equipped, suffer no apparent shortages, and have enough surplus to have established and maintained substantial caches. Chinese aid to the non-Communists is not as generous, but the Chinese appear to want to maintain viability of the non-Communist factions in order to preserve the coalition and the legitimacy it provides.

(S/NOFORN) On balance, Hanoi succeeded in improving its position significantly, though without putting any resistance element completely out of business. The Vietnamese discredited the KPNLF's military capabilities.

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[REDACTED] On the resistance

side, recent developments have further emphasized the military dominance of the DK. Not only did the DK put up a strong defense against the Vietnamese in the Phnom Melai Campaign, but they were able to maintain a degree of guerrilla activity in the Cambodian interior.

MILITARY PROSPECTS

(S/NOFORN) The remainder of 1985 will be a key period for the resistance, especially the battered KPNLF.

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(S) We anticipate a decline in military activity for the balance of 1985. In part, this will reflect the seasonal tendency for military operations to contract during the May November monsoon season. Apart from weather considerations, however, the non-Communist resistance will be preoccupied with training units for infiltration, and with establishing arms caches within Cambodia. Although some KPNLF infiltration attempts will be made during 1985, these will be designed primarily to test the Vietnamese infiltration barriers and to demonstrate to ASEAN that the KPNLF remains militarily viable. To replace bases overrun by the Vietnamese, the KPNLF may establish smaller, less permanent camps near the Thai-Cambodian border.

(S) The DK are believed to have some arms caches already in place in the Cambodian interior, particularly in Kampong Cham and Kampong Thum provinces. Because the DK acquitted themselves relatively well in the losing campaign for Phnom Melai, we expect that they will prove less demoralized and more

resilient than the KPNLF, and will be relatively active in the Cambodian interior during the monsoon season. The DK may also harass forward-deployed Vietnamese/KPR units, and attempt to cut their communications with the interior.

(S/NOFORN) The Sihanoukists will continue to be militarily insignificant, while retaining political importance as a possible communications channel between the resistance and the Vietnamese/KPR.

(S) We anticipate some change in the character of the fighting in Cambodia. As the Vietnamese proceed with the construction of ditches and other infiltration barriers near the Thai border, they will become tempting targets for the resistance. Whereas in past years the resistance has felt compelled to defend fixed bases along the border, construction of fixed installations by the Vietnamese would put them to some degree on the defensive, and provide in turn a fixed target for the resistance.

(S) It is important to underscore the limitations the Vietnamese and PRK face. In spite of the size of the force the Vietnamese and their allies have deployed in the border area, they will not likely be able to stop resistance infiltration. The border area is too long and the terrain too dense to permit the Vietnamese to do so. This assumes, however, that the resistance forces will train properly for guerrilla warfare and make a concerted effort to conduct sustained operations inside Cambodia. These operations will have to be well planned, coordinated and supported by reliable intelligence information about the disposition of Vietnamese and PRK forces in the border area. The crucial determining factor is the will and fortitude of the resistance, and the willingness to make fundamental changes in strategy and forge an effective resistance coalition. On the military level there is evidence of some cooperation between the KPNLF and the ANS, but no evidence of any degree

of operational coordination between them and the Communist DK. In fact, some clashes have resulted when non-Communist forces tried to operate in interior areas claimed by the DK.

(S) We do not have any reliable means of measuring political support for the three resistance factions. It is our sensing that none of the three has demonstrated the combination of an attractive political program, appealing leadership, and favorable military prospects that might gain recruits in significant numbers. We believe that Sihanouk retains a residual appeal in parts of Cambodia, but his ANS faction is militarily impotent. On the other hand, Pol Pot continues to be regarded with fear and loathing in many parts of the country, especially urban areas. The KPNLF appears to fall somewhere in between. In the absence of a clear "winner" among these three, most Cambodian will attempt to stay out of the line of fire.

(S) Stepped-up resistance activities in the interior would damage the Cambodian economy, increase costs to the Vietnamese occupiers, and possibly increase the flow of refugees into Thailand. However, such activities will not necessarily increase the popular following of the resistance faction involved. Because groups operating in the interior will be obliged to live off the land to a considerable degree, stepped up resistance activities could even impact adversely on the faction in question.

(S) The non-Communist forces have an ample manpower base and could expand further if provided additional arms. It remains uncertain, however, that manpower and firepower increases would translate directly into increased military effectiveness. The steady increases in the numerical strength of the non-Communists over the years have not been matched by commensurate military significant operations in the interior. They claim that this results largely from inadequate and irregular supplies of arms and ammunition. While they had

adequate arms and supplies for defense of the base camps [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] they would probably need regular and more dependable sources of arms for extended interior operations. More important requirements for the non-Communists, however, center on leadership, training, and the will to mount effective and sustained guerrilla operations. Another problem to be faced is their probable inability to challenge the DK in the event of Vietnamese withdrawal, or even if an improved non-Communist presence in the interior should elicit DK hostility.

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(S) Military and political leadership in the non-Communist factions is lacking at all levels and there is little prospect for a dramatic improvement in the near term. New, creative, dynamic, competent, and dedicated leadership is needed, and those who do not meet these standards would need to be replaced. This will be particularly difficult since many who are now in the highest positions would be the first to go.

(S) The non-Communists have long needed to retrain and to develop a completely new strategy. Up to this point, their primary goal was to defend their base camps, which they saw as symbols of their political legitimacy. They had no illusions about military victory, but rather sought to force a political compromise by showing that their border enclaves could not be suppressed. Such forays into the interior as were conducted by the non-Communists seem to have been done primarily to impress their foreign supporters. There seems to have been less concern with testing Vietnamese and PRK ability to guarantee security in the interior, and even less with the need to increase the cost to the Vietnamese.

(S) The DK, by contrast, have the objective of driving the Vietnamese out of Cambodia by force, as unrealistic as this may seem. Internal forays are designed to inflict the maximum military damage. They are waging classical

guerrilla warfare with an organization which is military rather than political. Border camps, and their attendant publicity, are much less important.

(S) The non-Communists must learn to operate in a similar manner. The inability of the Vietnamese and PRK to seal the border completely at this stage, and terrain which is favorable to guerrilla infiltration in many areas, make such a change in strategy feasible. An increase in arms and supplies could contribute somewhat to resistance effectiveness, but it would not be a determining factor. Far more important are training, leadership, morale, and will, and a fundamental change in philosophy, orientation, and strategy. Only time will tell if the non-Communists can meet the challenges facing them. One should not write them off prematurely, but their past performance does not provide much of a basis for optimism.

POLITICAL PROSPECTS

(S) Vietnam will stand pat, while professing to seek negotiations that will exclude the DK. It will seek to divide the ASEAN nations, in particular to drive a wedge between Indonesia--long suspicious of China's ambitions in Southeast Asia--and the other ASEAN nations. At the same time, Hanoi will probably keep alive contacts with the Sihanoukists, with a view toward fomenting dissidence within the resistance. Hanoi will at some point indicate interest in a new Cambodian government that would include non-Communist representation but exclude Pol Pot and most of the DK.

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Although ASEAN support for the non-Communists

appears firm over the short term, ASEAN will continue to initiate diplomatic probes with a view towards ascertaining Hanoi's intentions.

(S) China will work to restore a Cambodia friendly toward China or at least neutral. To this end China will provide generous assistance to the DK. In part to compensate for its relative military inactivity along the Sino-Vietnamese border, Beijing will provide limited assistance to the non-Communists as well as to the DK, and will encourage other countries to do likewise.

(S) The USSR will continue to provide massive military and economic aid to Vietnam, and may upgrade slightly the military equipment delivered. The growing use by the Soviet of base facilities at Cam Ranh Bay makes it unlikely that the Soviets will press Vietnam to take steps relative to Cambodia that Hanoi perceives as inimical to its long-range interests.

IMPLICATIONS FOR US POLICY

(S) China and the ASEAN countries would welcome the provision of US military assistance for the non-Communist resistance forces in Cambodia. The ASEAN Foreign Ministers meeting in Bangkok on 11-12 February 1985, called on the international community "to increase support and assistance to Cambodian people in their political and military struggle...." This appeal was primarily aimed at the United States. Thailand, Singapore, and Malaysia in particular have expressed the hope that US aid would be forthcoming, and have frequently drawn on the Afghanistan analogy to justify the appropriateness of US military assistance to the Cambodian resistance--contending that morally the situations are identical. They believe that building up the resistance represents the only chance of forcing the Vietnamese to accept a negotiated settlement in Cambodia.

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(S) China might be inclined to reduce its support of non-Communist resistance forces if the US began providing such assistance. The Chinese have always maintained that the Khmer Rouge provide the only effective resistance to the Vietnamese, and that they prefer to focus their support where it counts. They have provided assistance to the non-Communist factions only reluctantly, ostensibly in response to the urging of Prince Sihanouk, the ASEAN countries, and the US. Beijing does not believe the non-Communist factions hold much promise. Its support to them is largely a political gesture to distance itself slightly from too close an association with the discredited Pol Pot, and to project an image of even-handedness in assisting a coalition that has better prospects of retaining international recognition and support. Beijing's assistance to the non-Communist factions may also be a way of hedging its bets. The Chinese are not irrevocably committed to the Khmer Rouge, and would probably live up to their professed desire to aid any group which proves itself to be an effective fighting force.

(S) Covert military assistance is provided to the Cambodian resistance by China

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If the focus of resistance activities were to shift to the Cambodian interior, the resistance would face serious logistical problems in connection with the establishment and maintenance of arms caches. It should be noted, however, that this is a problem facing the resistance either with or without US aid. It is one that the KPNLF is attempting to deal with at present.

(S) There is no certainty that US weapons would not fall into the hands of the Khmer Rouge. If the non-Communist resistance were to show signs of exceeding the Khmer Rouge in strength, or if its equipment were to become superior to that of the Khmer Rouge, we would anticipate an increase in Khmer Rouge attempts to ambush non-Communist units and to seize their weaponry.

(S) It is doubtful whether even massive US aid, accompanied by military training, would permit the resistance to inflict such punishment on the Vietnamese as to oblige them to seek a political settlement. The fundamental

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Weaknesses of the Cambodian resistance are leadership, strategy, and tactics which are unlikely to be affected by US aid at present. For the moment, the Vietnamese show no sign of settling on any terms other than their own.

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